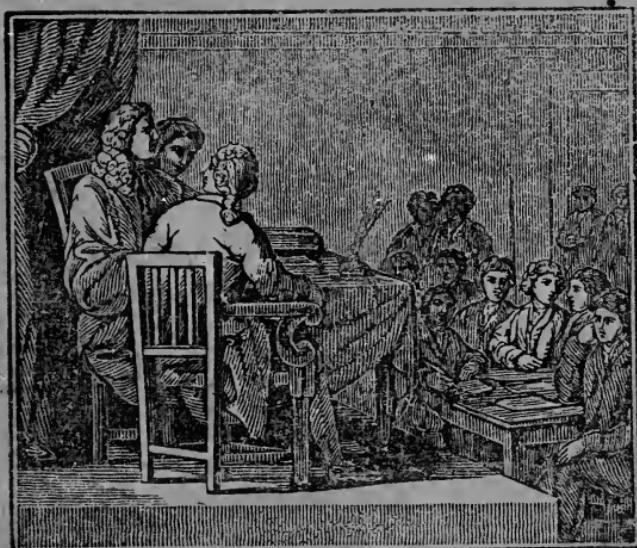


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THE STORY OF JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN:



A Poem. ✓

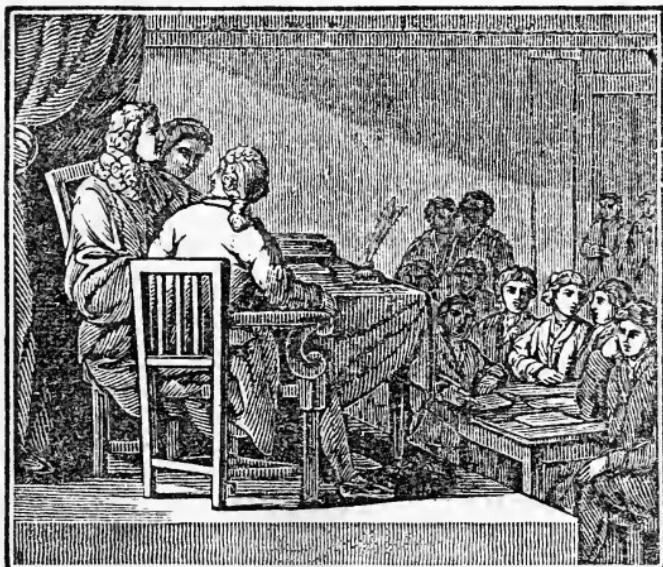
By John E. Wright

"God setteth the solitary in families; he bringeth out those which are
bound with chains; but the rebellious dwell in a dry land." — Ps. lxviii. 6.

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THE STORY OF JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN:

A Poem.

GEN. XLIII TO XLV.

BY JOHN EYRE,

AUTHOR OF CHARITY: A POEM. 1 COR. XIII.

- 1 THE famine was come which threaten'd with starvation,
The bread was nigh spent and no more to procure,
So they look'd at each other and sought salvation
From want now in view which they soon must deplore.

- 2 The Patriarch heard there was corn at a distance,
Get you down, he exclaim'd, on purpose to buy ;
Go to Egypt and purchase to save in this instance,
To make us some bread that we live and not die.
- 3 So they saddled their beasts suppose in the morning,
And set forward amain the ten in a band,
Like a number of men in sorrow or mourning,
To seek for their bread in an heathenish land.
- 4 On arriving at length they mingled with strangers,
No difference was seen from the cov'nant of grace,
As indigent beggars expos'd to such dangers,
They bow'd themselves down to the man of the place.
- 5 The Gov'nor had ris'n to a place of high station,
From a captive or slave God set him on high,
For now he was placed near the head of the nation,
And honor'd of all who came thither to buy.
- 6 He saw and he knew them so nearly related,
Notwithstanding the distance there seemed between ;
Nor was his affection towards them abated,
To forbid him to own his indigent kin.
- 7 Yet he made himself strange whate'er his intention,
And spoke in a tone both unkind and severe,
As a prelude to what he might have to mention,
To show them their sin and lead them to fear.

- 8 For a deed yet untold lay hid like the leaven,
A secret and crime to some others unknown ;
Yet it had not escap'd the notice of heaven,
And must be brought forth as the fruit of seed sown.
- 9 O horror, to think that the crime must be mention'd,
What shame and remorse to have it reveal'd ;
Yet it must come to light howe'er it was question'd,
For no counsel on earth could keep it conceal'd.
- 10 "Whence come ye ?" he ask'd, or what is your nation,
I ask for your manners and morals as men ;
Of what country, I ask now, give the relation,
In order to trust should I see you again.
- 11 "Ye are spies," he exclaim'd, and come for inspection,
To search out the land ye most surely are come,
To discover our faults and then to make mention,
Of what ye have seen when arrived at home.
- 12 Not so, be it known, for although we are strangers,
We are brethren distress'd and seeking for bread ;
In company ten, now expos'd to such dangers,
One left with our Father, another long dead.
- 13 Thus what has been said still raises suspicion,
Of manners in past which in future protend,
Some things still behind and to speak in addition,
Of what was begun but not told in the end.

- 14 Now this I demand that there be no division,
In sending one back to bring Benjamin down,
That you may be prov'd and me sav'd from derision,
In showing to men that no falsehood we own.
- 15 Well knowing their guilt and in posture defenceless,
He put them in prison until the third day,
But kept only Simey—(no further relentless),
As pledge for the other and sent them away,
- 16 Now conscience awoke and smote with conviction,
That bad deeds tho' secret must surely come out ;
How they sold a Brother as if in affliction,
And feigned him dead by presenting a coat.
- 17 We are surely guilty, said one to the other,
And justice now calls for his blood at our hands,
For the anguish of soul we saw in our Brother,
When we cruelly sold him to Ishmael bands.
- 18 And Reuben appeal'd to the conscience more closely,
Recalling some words in behalf of the child,
Words spoken against their behaving so basely,
In foolishly yielding to being beguil'd.
- 19 But the Gov'nor as yet continu'd a stranger,
To hide his emotions, turn'd from them to weep ;
Yet return'd and commun'd, suppressing his languor,
To bind one an hostage in order to keep.

- 20 The rest he sent back well stor'd with provision,
And order'd the money to be put in each sack ;
When afraid and confounded at such a decision,
They trembled as it were and returned it back.
- 21 On return to the Father, they told him the story,
How the lord of the land had charg'd them as spies,
That he spoke to them roughly, like one in a fury,
To men of vile manners and forgers of lies.
- 22 Pain'd now at the issue, the Father was grieved,
Afraid that Simeon was taken away ;
“Of my children,” said he, “me have ye bereaved,”
Despairing to see them on some other day.
- 23 But Reuben now offer'd his sons to the slaughter,
And requested young Ben put into his care ;
Thus giving his pledge to restore him hereafter,
And rescue his Father from present despair.
- 24 But the Father as yet could not be contented,
Through surfeiting grief which had brought him so low ;
Should evil assail, which could not be prevented,
To bring down his grey hairs with sorrow and woe.
- 25 Now linger'd till threaten'd again with starvation,
And were called once more to seek for supplies ;
But Jacob must yield, in hope of salvation,
To send down his child, tho' he lives or he dies.

- 26 Now brought to a point, they were still unprovided,
And Jacob requested to buy them some food ;
But the question as yet remain'd undecided,
The only condition on which they now stood.
- 27 So Judah declar'd, such was the condition,
That otherwise they could not see the man's face ;
And poverty call'd them to such requisition,
In order to favor and merit his grace.
- 28 Now Jacob in effect, said why did ye mention,
Why say you'd a Brother remaining at home ?
Why us'd me so ill as through such a pretension,
To fill me with grief and perpetual gloom.
- 29 But as fallible men, they knew not the future,
Nor knew what events should hereafter transpire ;
But spoke in simplicity without any tutor,
To bring any trouble or injure the sire.
- 30 But Judah now offered himself as a surety,
At cost as it were of himself being slain ;
Thus pledging his word with dignified beauty,
To bear all the blame if he came not again.
- 31 Hence from want and persuasion the Father consented,
Yet as if to disarm the frowns of a foe ;
He ordered some gifts which must be presented
To him before whom they were oblig'd to bow.

- 32 "Take double," said he, and some fruits in your vessels,
 Some balm and some honey, and whatever still lacks ;
Take likewise your Brother, your presents and parcels,
 And money as an o'ersight found in your sacks.
- 33 To God's mercy and care, then be ye commended,
 Though my hopes as it were are still on the rack ;
Lest lacking in trust, ye cannot be depended,
 In restoring my sons by bringing them back.
- 34 Thus his heart seem'd to beat, his spirits to languish,
 Thro' bodings of evil which caus'd him to fret ;
Lest evil should follow to fill him with anguish,
 And trouble thro' life which he could not forget.
- 35 At length they set out, came and stood before Joseph,
 Who with sov'reign-like mien look'd down on the men
And ask'd them to dine with the peace of a seraph,
 And set them in order from Reuben to Ben.
- 36 Reviewing his manner, the men were astonish'd,
 And terror had dispel'd all innocent mirth ;
They spoke to the steward, that fear might be banish'd,
 And presenting their gifts, bow'd down to the earth.
- 37 "Oh, sir," they exclaim'd !—what trouble they'd got into,
 They knew not to speak in so woeful a case ;
Abash'd and confounded were they not ?—let me ask you,
 As not how to look their lord in the face.

- 38 The steward spoke kindly, which inspir'd with gladness,
 Dispel'd all their fears, and assur'd them of peace ;
 Brought Simeon out and banish'd their sadness,
 And gave them in prospect a happy release.
- 39 With patriarchal love he treated the strangers,
 And gave them some water, or washed their feet ;
 Gave food to their asses, so far from all dangers,
 And solac'd the men he seem'd willing to greet.
- 40 O reader beware and be kind to the stranger,
 A name that is sacred by the word of the Lord ;
 For the Saviour himself was laid in a manger,
 Who finally as judge will give your reward.
- 41 When Joseph return'd, they brought him the present,
 Without any rudeness or lightness or mirth ;
 With modest demeanor, and manners so decent,
 They made him obeisance, and bow'd to the earth.
- 42 He ask'd of their welfare with sociable mildness,
 Also of their Father if he was alive ;
 And look'd on his brother with brotherly kindness,
 Off'ring prayer to God, in whom we believe.
- 43 Having spoke a few words of Father and Brother,
 And ask'd a few questions, suppose of their kin ;
 By courtesy and love they united together,
 So sat down to eat and were merry within.

- 44 But to deal wisely with and show their demerit,
Call'd for wisdom, prudence, and firmness in him ;
Great beauty of character for one to inherit,
In purity of mind and clear of their sin.
- 45 As stranger yet knowing how near the relation,
His bowels yearn'd on them, and that he might weep ;
He turn'd to conceal his present sensation,
And hold fast the dignity he wanted to keep.
- 46 At length he dismiss'd them, well stor'd with provision,
And sent with them also his dear Brother Ben ;
But shrewdly recall'd them on such a condition,
As painfully requir'd one left there again.
- 47 So subtle was this, that they stood quite confounded,
And knew not to answer again by a word ;
Yea, such the requirement, their hearts were all wounded,
As sadden'd with sorrow or cut with a sword.
- 48 But the policy used to gain their detention,
Did not well agree with yea, yea, and nay, nay ;
For it charg'd them with theft, without any mention,
Of honesty here, tho' clear as the day.
- 49 To plead for themselves, they made this decision,
That the crime when prov'd should be punish'd with death :
That they all should be try'd without a division,
And surely would suffer on pledge of their faith.

- 50 And O why begin at that end of the question,
 But to save suspicion of knowing the fact ;
That where the cup was, or what the intention,
 Till they found the false charge in Benjamin's sack.
- 51 So this was the one he so scrupled in sending,
 For whom Judah stood pledg'd at cost of his life ;
Whom the Father had sent with such an heart-rending,
 And which at the outset had caused such strife.
- 52 The policy was such, and such the intention,
 To keep the said one Jacob loath'd to give up ;
That thus he made use of this witty invention,
 To hold him through means of the fraudulent cup.
- 53 Horror-stricken and dumb, they stood there confounded,
 And found it not easy to make a reply ;
For grief and vexation, like seas quite unbounded,
 So delug'd their hopes it was useless to try.
- 54 Hence they rent their garments like people of madness,
 Though we hear nothing said of tearing their hair ;
So tinctur'd with grief and o'erwhelmed with sadness,
 They appear'd like men on the brink of despair.
- 55 (What ! charged with theft in a country of strangers,
 An orphan condition while seeking for bread ?
What more could befall them, beset with such dangers,
 But hanging them up, or by shooting them dead.)

56 Hence they loaded their beasts, and went to the city,

But no invitation from the Gov'nor to dine;

For he seem'd against them as void of all pity,

Like a demon without any favor divine.

57 Devoid of defence as in time of affliction,

They obey'd and came back at the Gov'nor's word;

For trouble had come without a restriction,

(Or defence as it seem'd) from the hand of the Lord.

58 What deed have ye done, he then sternly inquired,

Know ye not such a man can surely divine;

The one with the cup now is justly required

As servant, and truly the cup is the sign.

59 So Judah, like one without food or much clothing,

Brought low since the Gov'nor was raised on high;

Bereft of all power to personal loathing,

Near alli'd to persons appointed to die.

60 For his words plainly show'd his helpless condition,

That he knew not to speak, or what he should say;

Confessing that God had mark'd his transgression,

Like criminals condemn'd, who only could pray.

61 Thus the tables were turn'd—the Gov'nor had risen,

With justice and power to chasten their deeds,

Supposing confession by some should be given;

Or pardon not granted, where justice thus bleeds.

- 62 Regard him then, reader, by whom actions are weigh'd,
 Who declares according to measure ye meet,
 Transgression like that of a Brother betray'd
 Shall be given by power ye cannot defeat.
- 63 Thus humbled, he confess'd himself as a servant,
 And likewise the one where the cup should be found,
 So distant was he from expecting preferment,
 As if class'd among thieves who ought to be bound.
- 64 But the Gov'nor laid claim to only the youngest,
 And sternly commanded the rest to be gone,
 To go to their home from the weak to the strongest ;
 With exception of one demanded alone.
- 65 But Judah stood pledged to bring back the Brother,
 " Let me speak, O my Lord, a word in thine ears ;"
 So poor and so weak, as if shaking with terror,
 In broken-like accents well nigh unto tears.
- 66 They talked on still, but with strange like emotions, □
 That the case in debate to each of them gave,
 Lest tearing the warp between such relations,
 Should bring down the Father with grief to the grave.
- 67 The Gov'nor likewise with feelings relenting,
 With grief and affection relaxing his heart,
 Was troubled (yet not as from crimes when repenting,) □
 That he could not then own or bid them depart.

- 68 With sympathy great, and a heart nigh to breaking,
 As friends of affection when ready to part ;
 Give place he required for freedom in speaking,
 To recognise men who are dear to my heart.
- 69 His feelings were great, and he show'd it by weeping,
 So loudly the inmates themselves also heard,
 Yet words restrained as to wake not while sleeping,
 When he spoke to Brethren who had him betray'd.
- 70 Amidst feelings so great with friendly confusion,
 With balance of passion against majesty's tone ;
 He said " I am Joseph" without any delusion,
 And spoke on a level as one with his own.
- 71 Confounded on hearing the secret disclosure,
 Struck dumb on rememb'ring the criminal deed,
 They could not reply to their newly found Brother :
 Tho' no spirit deceas'd or come from the dead.
- 72 When passion subsided he greeted them friendly,
 Not avenged himself for what they had done ;
 But invited them near, and spoke to them kindly
 As Joseph their Brother, for wrath he had none.
- 73 To save from anger, and dissuade them from grieving.
 He spoke of events as the order of God,
 That Providence sent him to save them from starving,
 Assuring therefore they were clear of his blood.

- 74 He spake of famine not in accents of terror,
As a Prophet he spoke of five years to come,
That God had made him a father to Pharaoh,
And proposed to give them also a home.
- 75 He assur'd them without fictitious pretension,
That their eyes really saw no Phantom or Ghost;
And he offer'd to keep without a deception,
Their flocks and herds also that nothing be lost.
- 76 He yearned over them with tender affection,
But fell with more ardor on Benjamin's neck,
Moreover he kiss'd all without an exception;
And blest them in general without any lack.
- 77 After easing himself of such an oppression,
He freely convers'd without using disguise;
In agreement with *Pharo* without a digression,
Invited them there with their families and wives.
- 78 Hence he sent them away with news to their father,
And warn'd them against falling out by the way;
With silver and raiment and other gifts further,
Such as food for future as well as to-day.
- 79 When arrived at home, with news unexpected,
That Joseph was living and lord of the land,
The Father surpris'd, and his mind so affected;
That he could not receive the news at their hand,

80 But seeing the wagons his spirit revived,
 And his son yet alive suppos'd to be slain,
 He came to himself as from stupor retrieved ;
 Like the man'ac restor'd to reason again.

81 Possess'd of reason with his spirits reviving,
 He spoke as in rapture expressing his joy ;
 " It's enough," said he that my son is still living,
 I'll go (down) and see him ere ever I die.

CONCLUSION.

82 Read over the story, and take some reflection,
 Adoring the power that ruleth on high,
 That God humbleth the proud and giveth correction,
 But saves the poor captive appointed to die.

83 How Judah elect in family distinction,
 As a sinner was humbled to the lowest degree,
 While the pure little dreamer cast out to extinction—
 Was exalted to set his enemies free.

84 How crimes tho' conceal'd to human perception,
 Are notic'd in Heaven and brought to the light :
 Which God's justice makes clear without a deception,
 And openly reveals to ev'ry man's sight.

- 85 See Lazarus tho' poor, by many neglected ;
 Yet the angels escort his soul to the skies,
While Dives in his splendor however respected,
 Sinks down into hell where he lifts up his eyes.
- 86 Adore then your Maker without intermission,
 Repent and return from your own evil deeds,
Avail yourself then of your Lord's intercession,
 And do it just now while his blood intercedes.
- 87 Reflect, therefore, reader, and go to the Saviour—
 Confess all your sins, and then wash them away,
Deeply humble yourself and inspect your behavior,
 That you may stand free in the great judgment day.

January 21, 1854.





